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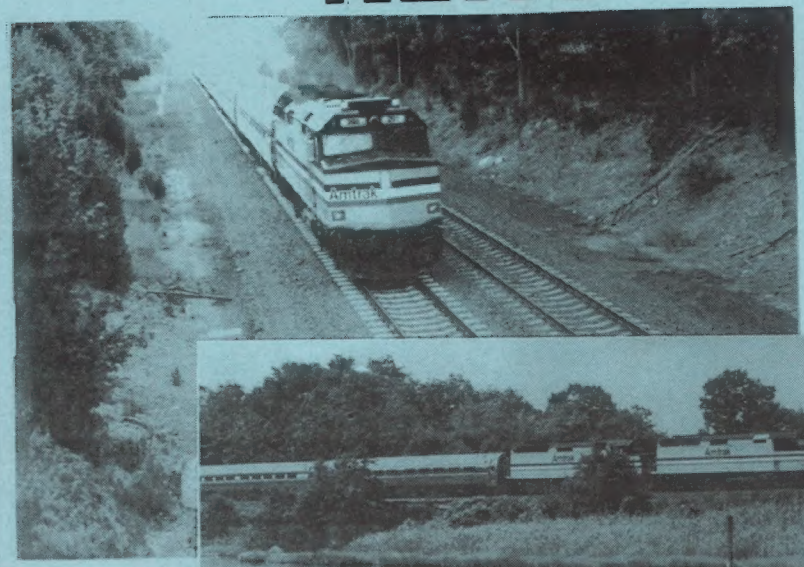

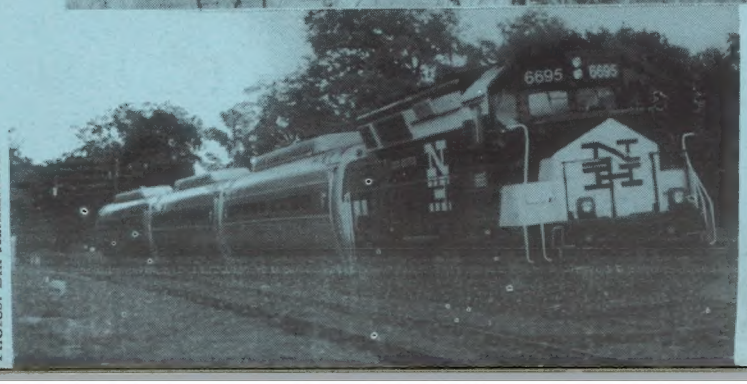

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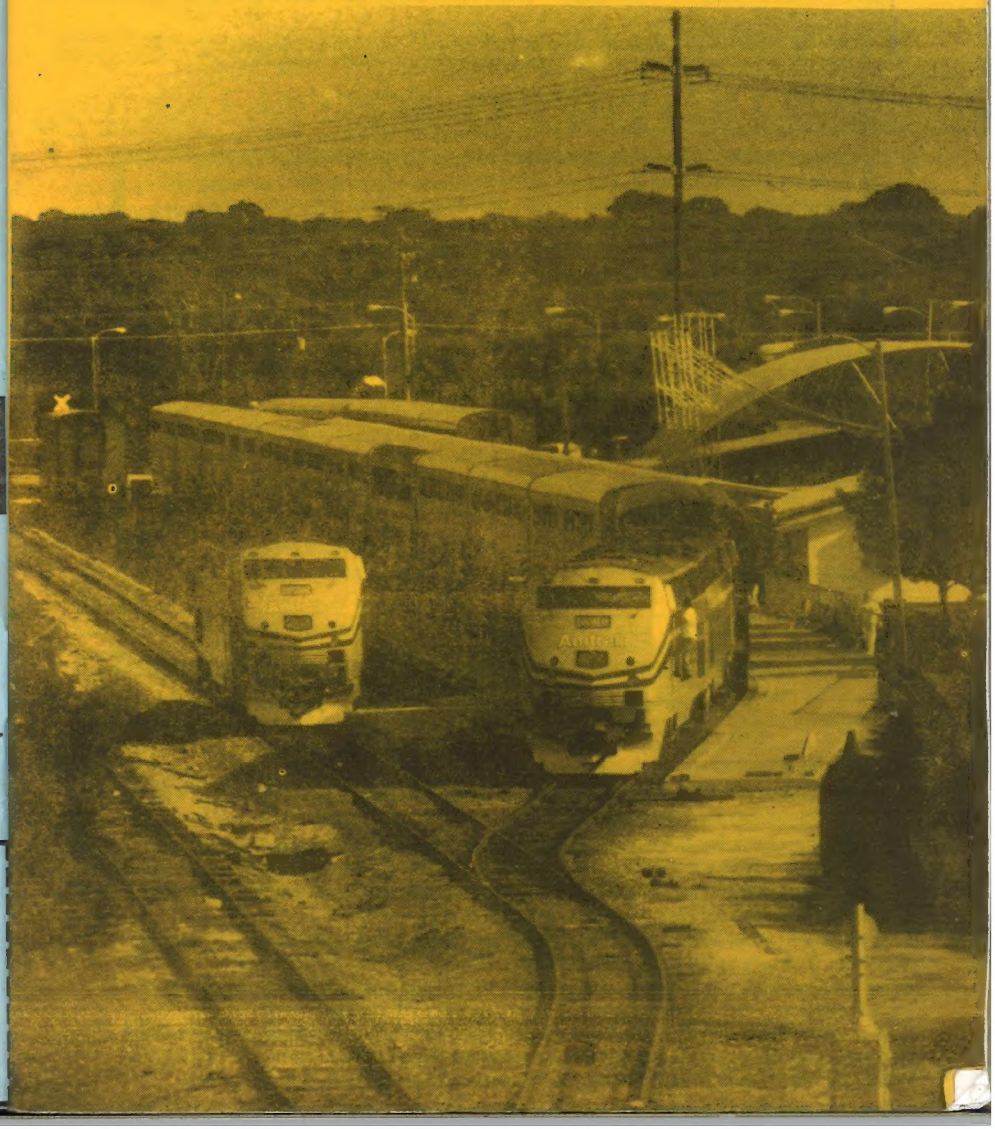

ON THE COVER

(Front cover-) Since Amtrak's **Auto Train** began service in Oct 1982, the Sanford FL terminal was the southern operational and maintenance base for only the **Auto Train**; however, this terminal now is also the eastern base for the **Sunset Limited**. As of last Nov 10, the **Sunset** no longer operates to Miami, but terminates 286 miles north of Miami at Sanford FL. With two Superliner-equipped trains now using this terminal, the facility has become an interesting place for train watching. This is the **Auto Train** preparing for departure from the Sanford terminal on Nov 1, 1996, just a few days before it was to start sharing space with the **Sunset Limited**.

(Rear cover-) The **Empire Builder** at Hoffman Junction in downtown St. Paul MN shortly after leaving the St. Paul Amtrak station on Sep 7, 1996, en route to Chicago. The **Empire Builder** currently runs daily between the Twin Cities and Chicago, and west of St. Paul/Minneapolis to Seattle and Portland OR four days a week, a distance of over 2200 miles to these West Coast cities from Chicago. For the latest on **Empire Builder** operations and problems, see elsewhere in this issue. Photos and captions by Alex Mayes.

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EAST COAST REPORT

An afternoon MARC commuter train pulls into the Brunswick MD station on Oct 15, 1996. Brunswick is the western end of the line for most MARC trains; however, three trains currently continue on to Martinsburg WV. Ridership on MARC has steadily increased over the last few years, which has increased demand for this service. However, CSX, over whose tracks MARC trains operate, is strongly opposed to any more trains on these lines. Photo & text by Alex Mayes.

CLOSING OUT 1996 WITH A SNOWY AM-RIDE

Light snow sprinkles were predicted for the New Haven and Coast Line areas on Dec 31, but it was only cloudy when train 12, the **Fast Mail**, arrived at New Haven on track 8. The Solari board in the station at 8:45am was already flashing "all aboard" for train 412, the Springfield section.

When I reached the platform the Meatballs (AEM-7s) were already off and out of sight and #412's F40 was backing down. Mail and baggage were being unloaded and loaded from the MHC at the head of the train. After seeing where the cut would be made between 412 and 12, I boarded a non-working café which would be the head car on 12. Plopping my bag in an empty seat, I then went out to record the consist.

It was engines 904, 917 off at New Haven, F40 288 on, cars 1539 MHC, coach 21615, café 20049, coach 21625 (all to Springfield as train 412), remainder to Boston as train 12: F40 387, GP40TC 199 (ex-GO Transit), non-working café 20036, coaches 21164, 21033, 21623 & 21146, working café 20140, baggage 1003, and MHCs numbers unknown (off the platform and on a curve).

At 8:50am train 412 pulled forward and backed in on track 10 across the platform to await his 8:58 departure. Train 12's engines backed down, coupled and HEP was on before train 412 even left, and then the train pulled forward so the mail cars on the rear would be on the platform.

Train 412 left exactly on time and at 9:07am we did likewise. Passing the East Haven detector, we had 32 degrees and no defects. We reaced along up track 2 and by Madison I noted the roads were kind of white at the edges. By Clinton I could see that it was definitely snowing. After passing Westbrook, we began to slow. Hmmm. Too soon for Old Saybrook. Checking the timetable, I saw that train 171 was due out of Old Saybrook at 9:41 and we at 9:43. We had passed Shore Line East #3651 at 9:25 in a cloud of whipped-up snow.

We almost came to a stop before train 171 passed and I heard our engineer say

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"You guys are killing us." We left Old Saybrook 3mins late at 9:46 and soon clunked across the Connecticut River Bridge. The ground was totally white. Stop the train! I have to go back and get my boots! I had earlier ignored that little voice in my head saying "Take your boots, just in case."

As we slowed for New London, the ticket office called on the radio that he had two passengers for this train. "Send them out and we'll pick them up on the grade crossing." They boarded there, across track 1 while on-time folks were on the track 2 platform.

We left New London at 10:07, still 3mins late. The Midway detector, always a cold spot, said it was 23 degrees and the snow was swirling. As the train sped along, passengers would walk into this café car and look around for the attendant. I'd tell them that the café was at the rear of the train. No announcement about the café was ever made. In fact, at first this car had no P.A. nor blower, but the conductor took care of that before we reached Old Saybrook. I mentioned to him the white walls that have replaced the original garish "café orange" that will now show off everyone's paw prints. "That doesn't matter; all they car about is that the car has wheels under it."

We were still 3mins late at Mystic and soon passed train 93. We left Westerly only 2mins late at 10:30. It was still snowing like crazy and the Kenyons detector had 22 degrees.

We left Kingston still 2mins late and in no time we were approaching Providence. They must allow time to work the mail, as we arrived at 11:10 and the train leaves at 11:20. As we were pulling in, train 173 was leaving for a nearly on-time 11:08 departure. I stepped out onto a platform that was covered with 1½ inches of powdery snow. The engines and half of my car were off the platform. I noticed that the door at the head end of my car was open. "Watch your step. It's a big one." After a few mandatory photos, I went upstairs to the station and looked around. MY ride had not shown up yet, so I went outside for a few more photos. Then I went back inside where it was warm. At 11:20 I went out to watch train 12's departure. Woo, woo, highball, right on time. And beep, beep, my ride. Thanks for a great ride Amtrak. Happy New Year!--Bob Underwood.

Candy Cane Express, a train for kids suffering from cancer, along with their families, boarded at New Haven CT at 2pm Dec 8 for a holiday ride to South Norwalk and back.

Santa missed the train at New Haven and was picked up in Milford. Train consist was CT DOT/Shore Line East F7s 6690 and 6691 elephant style, and SPVs 1631, 1623, 1621, 1629 and SPV lounge/cab car 1001. The train bore a banner on each side of one coach, and the lead engine was adorned with a wreath on its nose. The train reached South Norwalk at 2:55pm and left at 3:23, following Amtrak train 86 back to New Haven. Once again many railroad folks donated their time to bring joy to these unfortunate children. The following day's New Haven Register had a page-3 story, and the CT Post had a front page story with color photos, one showing the train arriving at Milford.

The Boston MBTA published a new Framingham/Worcester Line timetable dated Dec 14, which features expanded service to & from Worcester. Mon-Fri there's a midday round trip, lv S. Station 12:05pm, ar Worcester 1:20; lv WOR 2:05, ar BOS 3:13. There are three BOS-WOR round trips on Sat, Sun & Holidays: lv BOS 8am, 12:35pm & 6:30pm; lv WOR 9:35am, 2:10pm & 8pm. At present there are no local stops between Framingham and Worcester. The timetables now carry an ad on one panel for CT's newest casino, The Mohegan Sun.

The bridge plates over tracks 2&4 at Bridgeport CT on Metro-North were taken down the weekend of Dec 28-29, and track 4 was open for service over the new bridge east of the station. I rode a westbd train over the 15mph runaround on the 29th and later rode eastbd on a train that platformed on reopened track 4. After leaving the station, we sailed over the reopened bridge. Track 2, which has no platform, is now filled with maintenance of way equipment, but as soon as it's ready for service, bridge plates over tracks 1&3 will go up and the temporary bridge will be demolished, and then new approaches for tracks 1&3 will be built. —Bob Underwood.

●●●

The Pennsylvania DOT announced Dec 18 that "In a move designed to rejuvenate passenger rail service between Philadelphia and Harrisburg, PA Gov. Tom Ridge today signed legislation clearing the way for $18.7 million in federal funds for the purchase of passenger train equipment for the Keystone Rail Corridor...

"Senate Bill 809 gives the Commonwealth authority to enter into a labor protection contract with Amtrak and other railroad-related unionized employees. The labor protection contract is required before federal funds can be used for certain transportation projects."

After the equipment comes and the rails are upgraded, the maximum speed on the corridor will be 110mph, instead of 55-70, the release noted. The cars will be diesel multiple units, each trainset being 2-4 cars and costing $3-$6 million. The Governor asked PennDOT to "fast track" the acquisition of the trainsets. A contract to buy them should be awarded by late summer.

●●●

NEC fare increase took place Jan 7, but was not loaded into Amtrak's computer until that date. Custom, Club & Metroliner fares rose, and increases are planned for other NE service in late Jan. Multi-ride tickets apparently will be expanded to more markets then, since many use local commuter trains instead of through Amtrak trains, due to higher fares on the latter. Sample new fares, Wash-NY: Custom $27 (up $7); Club $72 (up $13); Metroliner full fare $109 (up $3).

Some Metroliners now have full club cars again, with two attendants. This is because in peak times the half-club cars consistently sold out. Since Metroliner consists remain the same all day, the club cars have surplus capacity in midday. To avoid staffing the car with two attendants, a curtain closes off the unused end of the car on those trips where only a half-club would have been needed.

The full clubs had to come from somewhere. Until the Nov schedule change, the intent was to have full clubs on any NEDirect train with club service. Many did need full clubs, some did not. So now some have the full clubs and some the half-clubs. There is a definite assignment schedule for which trains get which type, but it is rather complex. In fact, some trains without club service actually have the club cars, to avoid having to switch them out. In most such cases, the club car is used for custom class, and the food ser-vice counter is not activated. In at least one case the club car is used as a coach (deluxe 1-&-2 seating at coach fare!). The other fact that is free-ing up club cars is the ongoing upgrade program for Metroliner cars. The seats are light blue, the dark carpeting has been removed from the car walls, and the medium brown carpet has been removed from the ceiling side panels. The result is a much brighter look. The exterior gets new, mostly blue striping, with Metroliner logo instead of NEDirect. NE menus have been upgraded also. —Gene Poon.

Amtrak "Legends Train" ran Boston to NY Jan 11 carrying 24 legendary greats from the Boston Celtics and NY Knickerbockers and 700 guests as part of the National Basketball Association's 50th Anniversary celebration. The 14-car train of Metroliner cars went directly to Madison Square Garden, which is directly above Penn Station. Amtrak in Nov ran a charter train for the Buffalo Bills from Albany to Rich Stadium. Next August the Kansas City Royals have booked Amtrak for a trip from Boston to NY.

Portland, Maine train service is still in limbo because of the Amtrak-Guilford dispute. NARP reported that Guilford in early Jan asked Maine officials to reconsider their decision to let Amtrak operate the service, and to let Guilford itself do the job. Amtrak must take the dispute to the Surface Transportation Board before Jan 31. Bids are going out for station design and work.

Stonington CT residents who last June filed suit to stop Amtrak electrification in CT were dealt a blow in early Jan when a US District Court Judge refused to halt the work. The judge said the FRA's environmental report was adequate and covered all bases.

The Boston MBTA on Dec 14 introduced weekend trains between Boston and Worcester. There are three round trips.

RAIL CANADA

Transport 2000 members are being urged to write to the Prime Minister, Transport Minister David Anderson, Minister of Industry & Tourism John Manley and Minister of Natural Resources Anne McLellan in support of VIA's plan to run Vancouver-Jasper trains six times a week rather than three. T-2000 national president David Glastonbury said that before 1990 the Banff and Jasper VIA services had 14 regular trains per week each way, besides the Rocky Mountaineer trips, and still the tourist demand was not fully met. The above officials all can be addressed at: House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6.

VIA's Comfort Class will be introduced this spring. It involves modified LRC and HEP 1 coaches.

VIA launched a plan called *Operation Stormwatch* in the Corridor in December. Under it, when a storm hits, VIA personnel throughout the Corridor contact radio station and advise them about VIA's operations and space availability.

Banff National Park receives over five million visitors annually, but does not even have daily train service.

VIA November ridership was up by small amounts from Nov 95, except for the Western Transcons, which were down 15.6%. Corridor was up 1.1%, Eastern Transcon up 1%, and system, including remotes, up 0.7%. Total system ridership in Nov was 270,411.

WEST COAST REPORT

Southbound COAST STARLIGHT at Emeryville CA. RTN photo.

Much credit for the strong vote in Nov for the Puget Sound Regional Transit plan is going to new RTA director Bob White. After the defeat of the first RTA plan in 1995 and the departure of White's predecessor, the highly-regarded Tom Matoff, White took a political approach, working with civic groups and local governments, addressing their concerns about the plan. While much of the original light rail was eliminated because of its construction costs, White is credited with isolating the RTA opposition down to the hard core concrete contractors and developers centered mostly on the Eastside, taking from them many of their key supporters, such as Everett Mayor Ed Hansen:

Carpool lanes, except for special access ramps, were kicked out of the plan and the money for them diverted to light rail when highway interests unexpectedly refused any compromise on their "absolutely no trains" stance, angering the RTA board. Boeing, Microsoft and other local business interests continued their support of the plan. One report had Microsoft chairman Bill Gates telling Bellevue developer Kemper Freeman Jr. Over lunch, "Kemper, get off the highway and onto the train". The story says Freeman was left staring at Gates in stony silence, in front of other Eastside dignitaries.

One of two Metro. King Co. Council members who opposed the transit plan was singing a different tune the weekend after the vote. Councilman Rob McKenna of Bellevue, who chairs the Council's transit committee, had criticized the commuter rail part of the plan, preferring more express buses for Bellevue. But on a local news interview program on CBS TV affiliate KSTW the Sunday after the vote, McKenna spoke eagerly of getting the rail parts of the plan going. Earlier, he and member Jane Hague, also of Bellevue, had tried to get a Council no-confidence vote in the RTA plan. The remaining 11 members refused to consider the request. —R.Shay.

●●●

Amtrak West announced that effective Jan 28 its fares on the West Coast would be calculated differently. Essentially, the roundtrip fare is eliminated, and every trip is figures on a one-way basis. This results in significant savings for most travelers, for the one-way fare will be generally half of the present roundtrip fare, which is usually less than double the present one-way fares. In some cases, the regular one-way fare will be almost cut in half. Besides the short-distance trains in the West, the **Coast Starlight** will be affected. The NE Corridor has had such a system for several years.

The Pacific Northwest's big snowstorm opened 1997 by playing havoc with transportation schedules. Freeways were blocked, Rivers flowing out of the Cascades rose over their banks. On Dec 28, transit bus service in the central Puget Sound region, in Pierce, King and Snohomish Counties, was cancelled—the buses were unable to leave their various central bases due to heavy snow drifts, and the streets and highways were too icy or flooded.

Amtrak chose to sidetrack its trains in Washington State. Rich Mason, an Amtrak manager based in Seattle, said trains would not leave the station (during the bad weather) "unless we are satisfied that we can operate the trains in a safe and timely fashion." Affected were all Amtrak trains serving Seattle. The service disruption began in the days after Christmas and continued through the New Year's holiday. —Jerome F. Sheldon.

The big news in the West was the weather as 1996 ran into 1997. A few days before Christmas a long period of rainy weather began on the West Coast. There was an extremely heavy snowfall in the mountains the weekend before Christmas. Beginning in the wee hours of Jan 1 rain from a Hawaiian storm fell nonstop for many hours, causing widespread flooding, slides and other problems. Besides depositing a large quantity of rain, the storm melted much of the giant mountain snowpack, sending that water into rivers which then began overflowing in an unprecedented fashion. Washington and Oregon were virtually devastated. Northern and Central California experienced flooding at a level almost unknown in recent memory.

The effect upon West Coast passenger train service was mammoth, with all routes except the **San Joaquin** and the Southern California trains experiencing disruptions. The effect was so large that we can only touch upon the highlights. The **Coast Starlight** route was severed north of the Bay Area for many days into January. It was restored on Jan 17, earlier than previous railroad predictions. Amtrak managed the restoration as follows: "On Jan 16 train 11 will deadhead to Portland with a reduced consist. Bus service will represent train 11 from Seattle to Eugene. The deadhead set will turn for train 14 on Jan 17 from Portland to Seattle. On Jan 16 train 14 will depart L.A. with a reduced consist as a stub train to Oakland. This set will turn for train 11 on Jan 17 from Oakland to L.A. On Jan 17 train 11 will depart Seattle with as normal a consist as can be assembled and operate through to L.A. On Jan 17 train 14 will depart L.A. with a normal consist." Some slow orders were still in effect, so trains were expected to run late. The main trouble spot was in the Sacramento River canyon north of Dunsmuir CA, where massive slides and washouts occurred. Observers noted with pleasure that the UP got the line restored faster than predicted and gave precedence to the **Starlight** over some freights on that route.

Early in the New Year's storm, the **Capitols** suffered disruptions. On New Year's Day water was over the rails at Martinez and Emeryville, though service continued there. The **San Joaquins** surprisingly were spared major disruption, even though beginning in early Jan there was unprecedented flooding, with levee breaks, close to their route.

The **California Zephyr** for a time was not running west of Salt Lake City, and buses were provided only as far west as Reno. The city of Reno suffered major flooding from the Truckee River. Casinos were flooded and closed, and presumably the Amtrak station suffered a similar fate.

The Portland-Seattle-Vancouver route was probably hit hardest. Heavy rains caused

(continued on page 20)

MIDWEST REPORT

(Left:) An inbound St. Louis MetroLink light rail vehicle in Forest Park approaching the Union Avenue overpass in July 1996. Photo by Don Scott.

On Jan 16 Judge Suzanne Conlon of the US District Court for the Northern District of IL ruled that the environmental impact statement supporting construction of the I-355 Tollway extension between Lemont (I-55 junction) and New Lenox (I-80 junction) was inadequate.

The ruling came in litigation initiated by the Sierra Club, two local community organizations and homeowners along the route. The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority had acquired almost all the land needed for this 12.5-mile, 6-lane highway and was lining up contractors for the t-year (1997-98), $700 million construction project when the judge's ruling stopped the work.

The problem with the EIS, the judge said, is that it assumes houses and business-

es will locate along the tollway route whether the road is built or not, resulting in "a forecast of future needs that only the proposed toll road can satisfy." The judge wants the Authority to take a serious look at the no-build option mandated by federal law.

The Authority (a Republican-dominated agency controlled by the state) thinks it can "readily" demonstrate that the highway will serve public needs and not have an adverse impact on the region's air quality. While the extension is proceeding under a veneer or supposed public need, most suspect its real purpose is to support construction of Gov. Jim Edgar's pet project, the proposed Peotone airport. Long-range plans show I-355 extending south of New Lenox to a junction with I-57 near the site of this hotly contested facility.

The original I-355 segment extends between Itasca and Lemont through Chicago's western suburbs. It opened in 1989. The highway parallels, at a distance to the east, the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern rail line on which Metra would like to operate rail commuter service, but that proposal has been stalled by intense opposition from influential people living along the tracks in the Barrington area.

●●●

The Chicago CTA and its 15 unions announced Jan 2 that they had reached a 4-year labor agreement that will, if ratified, carry the agency through the end of the century. Under the agreement, workers' pay will increase 9% over the 4-yr term. The current top rate of $18.35 for rail operators will rise to $20.01 in Sep 1999. Full-time employees will get a $1400 signing bonus; part-timers a $700 bonus. CTA has 12,552 unionized employees.

The pact was seen as significant because the parties were able to avoid binding arbitration and hold wage escalation to about 2% per year. The added cost will be offset by work-rule changes, an early retirement program and deferral of pension contributions. Also significant was the union's concession permitting CTA to hire part-time weekend and holiday workers at 65% of the top rate. CTA retirees will have first shot at these positions.

In Dec the Regional Transportation Authority approved CTA's $800 million 1997 budget after a shift of $20 million in capital funds to offset an anticipated operating deficit. CTA is trying to cope with declining ridership and revenue as its costs rise.

Illinois Gov. Edgar on Jan 14 said the state had ended (for now) the controversy over the escalating costs of Amtrak 403(b) operations in Illinois by entering into a 3-yr contract with Amtrak for continued operation of the trains (see press release below).

For the first time, the state can collect penalties for poor Amtrak performance. Amtrak, for example, must credit $2700 to the state if a train leaves its point of origin over 30mins late (it happens more often then you would think!). Because Amtrak is operating the trains on a fixed budget, it said it would "consider ways to improve the cost-effectiveness of providing food to passengers" (uh-oh!) and try to boost ridership. In mid-Jan Amtrak began a "friends ride free" promotion similar to those used on the California trains.

—Mike Blaszak.

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The following is the complete text of an Amtrak Jan 14 press release:

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. -- Amtrak and representatives of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) have reached agreement on a three-year plan to continue daily state-supported passenger rail service on three corridors radiating from Chicago. Under the plan, subject to legislative appropriation, Amtrak will continue to operate rail passenger service from Chicago to St. Louis, Carbondale and Quincy, Ill.

Amtrak has been working very aggressively to enhance service levels, improve productivity and develop a pricing structure that is affordable to Illinois and other states. Amtrak has been Illinois's business partner in operating state-supported trains for more than 25 years. In November, Amtrak submitted to the IDOT an innovative, multi-year package to provide daily service on the **State House, Illini** and **Illinois Zephyr** routes.

"We are very pleased with Illinois's decision," said Mark S. Cane, President, Amtrak Intercity. "We have worked very hard to keep this business for Amtrak and we are making performance guarantees that will benefit all our customers."

Specifically, Amtrak is promising to pay financial penalties if individual instances of departures from origin points are more than 30 minutes late and if departures from points of origin are less than 99 percent on time annually.

Also, Amtrak will operate the trains within the service parameters outlined by IDOT including trip times, scheduling and minimum seating capacity on each train. Food service will also be provided on the three services.

"The partnership between Amtrak and Illinois has been strengthened by an agreement which challenges both parties by properly placing incentives and raising performance standards," Cane said.

Under the plan, the state agrees to pay to Amtrak $7.0 million in 1997-98, $7.55 million in 1998-99 and $7.95 million in 1999-2000.

"As we did in Fiscal Year 1997, we will be providing the service at a fixed price, with Amtrak bearing the full business risk and having the incentive to provide the best service at the lowest cost," Cane added. "Our customers can now be assured of continued service through the end of the decade, giving us a chance to build ridership and forming a basis for our plans to increase short and medium-distance service in the corridors radiating from Chicago."

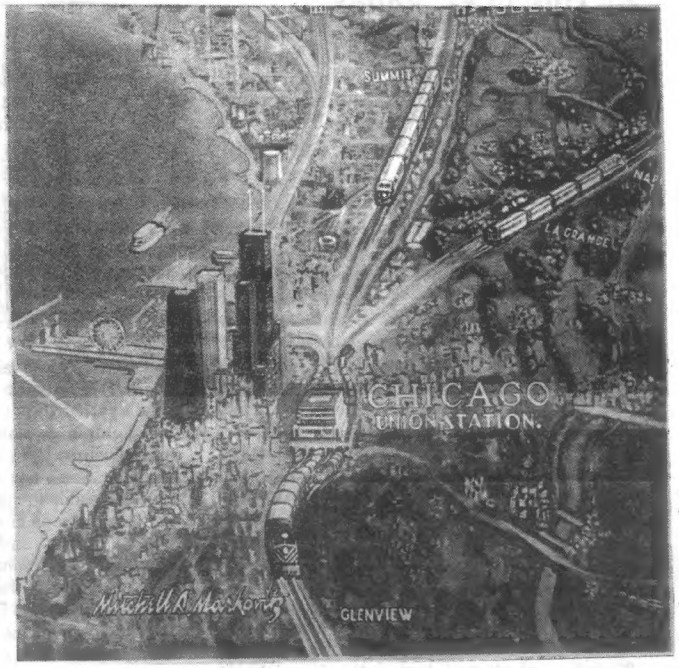
Schedules are largely unchanged along the routes of the **Illinois Zephyr** (Trains #346, 347 & 348) and the **State House** (Trains #300 & 305), with daily trains northbound/eastbound in the mornings and southbound/westbound trains in the late afternoon. The southbound **Illini** (Train #391) from Chicago will continue to originate in the late afternoon/evening. Plans are to originate the northbound **Illini** (Train #392) from Carbondale and Champaign, following the same successful pattern of the **Illinois Zephyr** and the **State House** and allowing for an afternoon of shopping or business in Chicago and a return downstate in the evening.

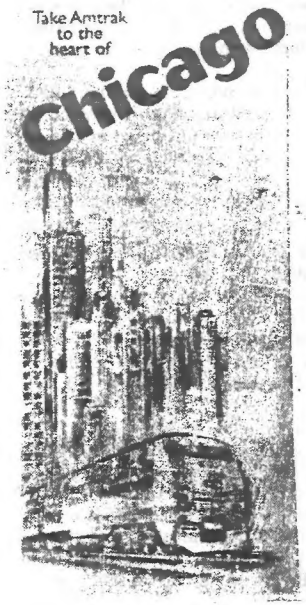
Amtrak brings unique advantages to Illinois and other states as an operator of passenger rail service. Among the Amtrak advantages are: a strong national network of short, medium and long-distance connecting trains; expert employees; lengthy market experience; contractual relationships with freight railroads; a national reservations system, a marketing and sales network; and new equipment and facilities.

Amtrak Intercity operates passenger rail service throughout much of the United States, including Midwest corridor trains for the Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, Kansas City and St. Louis markets as well as most other Amtrak long-distance services. Headquartered in Chicago, Amtrak Intercity employs nearly 6,000 people in 39 states and is one of three Amtrak strategic business units.

Hot off the press is a new brochure from the Illinois DOT, entitled "Travel Illinois by Train." A sample of it is shown at right. It's a foldout color map-drawing of Illinois, looking south from Chicago, by artist Mitchell A. Markovitz. The sample here shows Chicago Union Station. The map's reverse lists cities served by trains, with points of interest given for each, along with visitor bureau telephone numbers.

Also new is a brochure "1997 Midwest Getaways" that provides hotel and car rental deals to Amtrak users. This and two other publications—"Take Amtrak to the Heart of Chicago" (see illustration below) and "Take Amtrak to the Heart of St. Louis"—are all available free from: Bureau of Railroads, 2300 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield IL 62764.





Notes From A Pre-Thanksgiving Trip

By Duane W. Roller

A few days before Thanksgiving I made a Chicago-New Orleans-Washington circuit which allowed me to travel almost two hundred miles of new trackage and make my first ride in a Viewliner sleeper. Some notes follow:

1. Heading down the Y&MV. My first trip since the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS was rerouted in Mississippi was on November 23-24. I could see major improvements in this train since I last rode, with the Superliner sleeper full and nearly 150 coach passengers leaving Chicago. The full meal service was a welcome change from past years, and the addition of a Superliner lounge was also pleasant. Timekeeping was much improved, with actually many waits for time.

For me the high point was the nearly 200 miles down the IC's Yazoo District, still known locally by its parent road, the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley. We left Memphis on time, and at Y&MV Junction rather than curve left, as always before, we curved right and were on Y&MV trackage. For the next four hours we ran through the edge of the Mississippi Delta country, through tiny towns and across many rivers and bayous. Except for its northernmost 20 miles, which had hosted the IC's DELTA EXPRESS to Greenville until the mid 1960s, the line had seen no passenger service since just after World War II.

One might think a line across such flat country would be straight and fast. But it is remarkably curvy, twisting and turning to avoid the many swamps and to minimize the crossings of the major river system, the Tallahatchie/Yalobusha/Yazoo, in which ruins of Civil War federal gunboats still lie. The night before, a strange PA announcement had warned passengers that the trip from Memphis to Jackson would be "very rough," which was a great exaggeration, but made a number of passengers nervous. I don't understand why it was necessary to make this announcement at all. There was a lot of fast running, and a lot of slow places, but nothing particularly rough.

There are two stops on the Y&MV: Greenwood, whose classic brick IC station is still in use, and is a crew change, and Yazoo City, where a new shelter was constructed which still has a banner, "Yazoo City welcomes Amtrak." There was good business at both stops. A stop at Marks is planned, but there was no evidence of a platform.

It was a pleasant morning, ruined, unfortunately, by the return of the curse of daytime movies in the lounge. At 10:00am the movie announcement was made: the 25 or so passengers in the lounge mostly left, to be replaced by the handful (about 7) who needed the movie.

2. In a Viewliner. Two days later I left New Orleans on the CRESCENT in my first trip in a Viewliner compartment. Generally I was very impressed with the car: many of the negative features of the Superliners had been modified (or, to be more accurate, returned to the Pullman norm) . There are curtains which are on tracks and actually close (although they are very thin) . There is a great deal of shelf space. Sliding panels rather than curtains are on the aisle side. The lighting system has been much improved. And of course the toilet and washbasin facilities are nice. Some negatives: the bed is quite small, it is impossible to make the room dark because of the thin curtains and the many illuminated light switch panels, and, horror of horrors, it is impossible to eliminate the PA system from the room. Even if the sound system is off, an override injects the PA into the room, so one does not even have the minimal escape from the malapropisms and oral diarrhea of Amtrak's PA announcements. Few things can turn one off of train travel more than being read the breakfast menu (not once but twice!) before 7:00am. Except for this terrible thing, the rooms are very nice.

3. Further comments on the CRESCENT. We left New Orleans with 42 passengers, 9 in sleeper. I was the only passenger in one car, and remained so until Atlanta. It will take a lot of convincing to make me believe that running an empty car (for I could have been accommodated in the other sleeper) all the way from New Orleans to Atlanta is more cost efficient than adding it at Atlanta.

It was not a good day for the CRESCENT. Half an hour out of New Orleans, on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, the power failed. Because a maintenance crew could come out from New Orleans, it was fixed, but only after 85 minutes delay. Then at the Black Warrior River in Alabama, we were held an hour for #19 and a very slow KCS freight. Thus by Birmingham we were nearly three hours late, a lateness maintained from then on. I was to change in Washington to the CARDINAL, but had to detrain at Manassas for the connection.

4. On the CARDINAL. The CARDINAL is the Energizer Bunny of Amtrak: nothing seems

(continued on page 23)

New Year's Resolutions For Amtrak

By Duane W. Roller

The following is a list of proposed New Year's resolutions for Amtrak and its employees. None deals with broad questions of policy or survival: all are matters which would vastly improve the quality of an Amtrak trip, but have been repeatedly neglected in the past. Following these resolutions would eliminate problems which occur repeatedly, often on every trip. None would really cost money; some would save money. All would increase passenger good will. The list in no particular order.

1. Resolve to use the PA system with more moderation. No more malapropisms, no more oral diarrhea, and no more early morning announcements. Is it necessary to wake up the whole train at 7am to get people into an empty diner? Do dining car menus have to be read out loud (not once but several times)? When one crew member gives a message, why does another have to give the identical message again?

2. Resolve never to tell a passenger "I can't lift luggage." If you can't lift luggage, don't bid for a job which expects it, such as sleeper attendant.

3. Resolve not to serve the last meal in the diner on a long-haul train at an absurd hour, simply to make your job easier and so you can be off the train before the passengers. No more 10:30am lunches (for a 2:30pm arrival) or 3:30pm dinners (for a 7:30pm arrival). And no more last meals on plastic so you won't have to wash dishes again.

4. Resolve that there be no more daytime movies in the Superliner lounge, especially during major scenic points which Amtrak advises as the high point of the trip.

5. Resolve to turn down crew radios, especially at night in sleepers. Few things are more offensive than to have a radio blaring in your ear while the conductor takes your ticket.

6 Resolve to open more than one door at stations on corridor trains, when there are crew to do so. As a corollary, if you have the equipment, use it. No more crowding everyone into one or two cars so that the crew can have a private party car.

7. Resolve to end the delaying curse of multiple stops. Granted, long trains and short platforms do not mix. But when there is a long platform and an agent at the station, passengers can be directed to where to stand. Three stops and 13 minutes for the Empire Builder at Glenview is absurd.

8. Resolve, as a reservation agent, not to work more than one customer at once. This is far too common: when you call in and are put on hold for several minutes each time you ask a question, you wonder just what the reservation agent is doing.

9. Resolve not to invoke "federal regulations," at every turn to make one's job easier. Some are legitimate but many are mythical. My favorite: "Federal regulations require that passengers remove the cover from their pillows and their seat back covers and give them to the attendant. If this is not done, we will not be allowed to enter Chicago."

10. Resolve that no more train chiefs will spend the trip sleeping in their rooms.

The Canadian Rail Passenger Yearbook explores the history and current events of passenger railroading. Loads of colour and b&w photos to delight the eye with in-depth articles for the curious. The 1996-1997 edition is now available for $21.95 plus $2.50 postage. Order from Trackside Canada, P. O. Box 1369, Station B, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5R4

Michigan's Amtrak Trifecta

By Jack M. Turner

It is easy for rail passengers traveling between the East Coast and Chicago to bypass the state of Michigan as all three trains linking the Windy City with New York or Washington pass to the south through Ohio and Indiana. Despite the lack of through service to the east, Michigan rails hum each day to the sounds of ten Amtrak trains operating on three routes.

Six of these trains (three in each direction) connect Chicago with Detroit and Pontiac while single round trips operate between Chicago and Grand Rapids and Chicago and Toronto via Port Huron. All three routes emanate from Chicago Union Station and turn eastward through Hammond-Whiting, Indiana. East of that point the *Pere Marquette*, bound for Grand Rapids, turns northward while the *International*, destined for Toronto, and the Pontiac trains all follow the same route as far as Battle Creek, Michigan.

Chicago to Detroit service has been a mainstay of the Amtrak system since the passenger carrier's inception in May 1971. Initially, the route was served by two daily trains, the *Wolverine* and the *St. Clair*, using conventional steam-heated equipment A new train, the *Blue Water Limited*, linking Chicago and Port Huron, Michigan, was advertised in Amtrak's November 15, 1974 timetable.

A third train was added to the Chicago to Detroit route in May 1975 along with a weekday Detroit to Jackson, Michigan train, the *Michigan Executive*. The three Chicago to Detroit trains were equipped with new bi-directional French Turboliners and listed simply as *Turboliners* rather than by individual train names. In November 1975 one of the Turboliners was extended to Milwaukee, stopping in Chicago for only 25 minutes westbound and 33 minutes eastbound. Along with a through Milwaukee to St. Louis operation, the Detroit to Milwaukee service was one of the few trains ever scheduled to operate through Chicago Union Station rather than terminating there. Both through routes were short-lived.

The Wolverine and the *St. Clair* names returned in June 1976 as Amfleet trains bracketing an unnamed midday Turboliner on the Chicago to Detroit line. The Port Huron train, meanwhile, drew a Turboliner consist on its run from Chicago. The *Twilight Limited* name was reapplied to the evening run during the January 1977 timetable change with the midday Turboliner recapturing the *St. Clair* name.

The *St. Clair* was re-christened the *Lake Cities* on August 3, 1980 and extended southward from Detroit to Toledo where connections were made with the *Lake Shore Limited* bound for New York and Boston. Along with the *Blue Water Limited*, this train offered Michigan's only remaining Turboliner service. By the following autumn the Turboliners had been withdrawn from service and all Michigan trains were assigned Amfleet equipment.

The International Limited debuted in 1982, taking over the route of the *Blue Water Limited* between Chicago and Port Huron then continuing east over Canadian National trackage through Sarnia, London, and Brantford, Ontario en route to Toronto. One of the train's two equipment sets consisted of Amfleet while the other used VIA Rail Canada Tempo cars of Canadian National lineage. The new train's name was shortened to the *International* during the following year. Eventually, one set of equipment was assigned new VIA LRC cars while the other set used Amtrak Amfleet.

The International's route between London, Ontario and Toronto was changed in April 1990 to a more northerly route through Kitchener and Guelph rather than the Toronto-Windsor corridor through Brantford. Meanwhile, on-board crews continued to consist of a combination of Amtrak and VIA employees while locomotive power usually came from VIA's F40PH-2 stable.

Detroit to Toledo rail service was annulled in 1995 and replaced by an Amtrak Thruway bus. Meanwhile, the *Lake Cities*, *the Wolverine*, and the *Twilight Limited* were extended to Pontiac, 23 miles north of Detroit. As Amtrak reduced and restructured services across its system during its 1995 budget crisis, both the *Pere Marquette* and the *International* were threatened with frequency reductions. Fortunately, the State of Michigan stepped forward with financial support that kept both routes operating on a daily basis. In November 1995 the *International* was upgraded with the introduction of Hi-Level and Superliner equipment which was deemed more comfortable and suitable than Horizon and Amfleet for the all-day trip between Chicago and Toronto.

Guide To The Michigan Routes

The following description of the Michigan routes is predicated upon an eastbound journey originating in Chicago. Points of interest referred to herein are located on the opposite side of the train for travelers heading west toward Chicago.

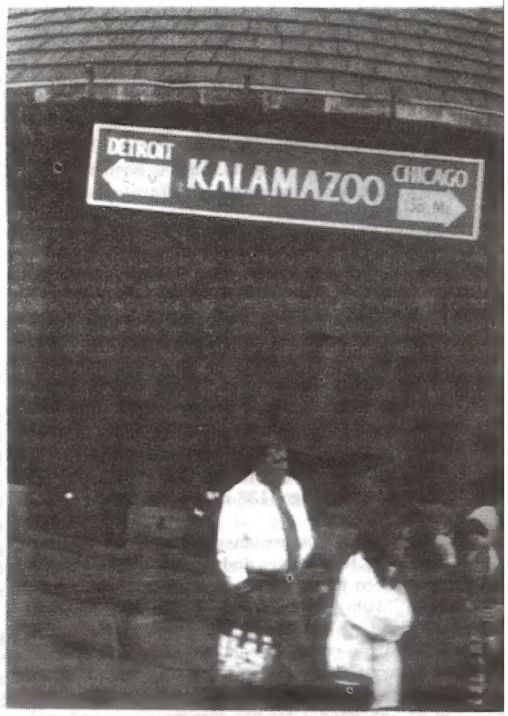
(Above:) In addition to the **International**, VIA Rail Canada's **Huron** serves the route through Kitchener, Ontario, location of this photo.
(Below:) The stop at Kalamazoo MI is the midpoint of Amtrak's Chicago to Detroit route. Sign reads "Detroit 142 mi.—Chicago 138 mi." Photos by the author.

All trains bound for Michigan depart from Chicago Union Station and head south past Amtrak's busy yards on the left. The routes used by Amtrak trains to the west peel off to the right soon after the yards are passed. Comiskey Park, home of the Chicago White Sox, follows on the left a few moments later.

The rail line gently curves to the southeast at Englewood and crosses the former Rock Island main line, now used by Metra commuter trains connecting Chicago with its suburbs southwest to Joliet. Englewood was the site of many famous railroad photographs of the Pennsylvania and New York Central railroads' flagship trains, the *Broadway Limited* and the *Twentieth Century Limited* pacing one another on their eastward journeys.

Soon the railroad crosses the Calumet River where it enters Indiana. Lake Michigan appears on the left as we near our stop in Hammond-Whiting. East of that station we enter a switch engine-lover's paradise as diminutive engines and slugs grace the yards of the region's many steelworks. A variety of locomotive power can be seen leading a parade of passing run-through freights and transfer jobs as we pass through Gary, Indiana.

The electric South Shore interurban line appears on the right as we pass the Burns Harbor defect detector 15 minutes east of Hammond-Whiting. A few minutes after passing the National Steel plant on the left, the Conrail route used by the *Lake Shore Limited* and the



Capitol Limited diverges to our right at Porter, Indiana.

The *Pere Marquette* line also separates from the Detroit and Port Huron lines, first branching off to the south at Porter, then passing above the Detroit line at New Buffalo, Michigan. The route to Grand Rapids then continues north, often following the eastern shore of Lake Michigan to Benton Harbor before taking a more inland route to Holland where it finally turns to the east. This CSX route is notable for its scenic views of vineyards north of New Buffalo, a picturesque harbor at St. Joseph, Lake Michigan sunsets on the eastbound run, and the windmill and spring tulips in Holland.

The International and all three Detroit-/Pontiac trains continue east from Porter on Conrail tracks once owned by the New York Central System. The rail line passes several charming red farmhouses on the left a few miles east of Porter then eases past the attractive downtown area of Michigan City, Indiana, also on the left. Lake Michigan reappears briefly on the left before New Buffalo where our train turns eastward and passes below the CSX route of the *Pere Marquette.*

Thirty minutes east of Michigan City, our train pauses at Niles, Michigan. The historic Niles train station stands on the left and is one of the nation's classic railway depots. Construction of the Romanesque style station began in 1890 to replace the original Michigan Central station which burned down in 1873. The brown sandstone depot is topped by a 68 foot tall clock tower featuring five foot tall dials. The New York Central took over the station in the 1930s, followed by successor Penn Central in 1968 and Amtrak in 1971. The station has been used in several movies including *Continental Divide, Midnight Run, and Only The Lonely,* albeit disguised as various locations.

Beyond Niles the railroad takes a northeast heading, passing through the attractive town of Sumnerville ten minutes later. Presently the railroad enters a farming region notable for its white barn and rolling cornfields. The farmlands give way to the city of Kalamazoo where Western Michigan University's Waldo Stadium appears on the right. The Kalamazoo train station is a classic red brick depot topped by a turret. A sign hanging from the platform side of the station notes the direction and distance to Chicago (138 miles) and Detroit (142 miles).

The railroad resumes its eastward heading departing Kalamazoo and promptly crosses the Kalamazoo River which ultimately empties into Lake Michigan south of Holland. A major junction with the Grand Trunk railroad is visible at Gord, nine minutes east of Augusta, Michigan. The busy Battle Creek station stop follows a few minutes later. The modern Battle Creek station is an intermodal facility bringing bus and rail service under one roof. Amtrak Thruway buses for East Lansing and Flint connect here with trains from Chicago. This also is the last stop before the *International* charts its own course to Toronto on the Grand Trunk line branching to the left beyond the station. Battle Creek is home to huge Post Cereal and Kellogg's Cereal plants which both stand adjacent to the railway east of the station. The Kellogg's plant is recognizable because of the large Tony the Tiger, visible on the left, standing near its entrance.

The route to Detroit is dotted with a mixture of small towns and Farmlands interrupted by the cities of Albion, Jackson, Ann Arbor, and Dearborn, each of which is an Amtrak station stop. The Ann Arbor station, opened in the mid-1980s, stands adjacent to the city's old stone depot which has been converted to a popular restaurant. Ann Arbor is normally a busy stop due in large part to the presence of the University of Michigan which stands several blocks south of the train station. The Dearborn stop serves this western suburb of Detroit and marks the beginning of a string of automobile factories located between Dearborn and Detroit. Soon the Detroit skyline appears on the right and our train winds its way to the city's north side where the fairly new Amtrak station is located. From here the railway treks to the northwest through the suburbs of Royal Oak and Birminghan to Pontiac, its final destination

Returning to Battle Creek, we step a the *International* for the all-day journey to Toronto. Just east of the Battle Creek station the line used by Amtrak's Detroit/Pontiac trains curves off to the right. We pass the Kellogg's plant and head northeast through the hamlets of Olivet and Charlotte. In approximately 50 minutes our train passes through Lansing, the capital of Michigan. Five minutes later the train stops in East Lansing where the Amtrak station is adjacent to the attractive and huge Michigan State University campus. The eastbound and westbound *Internationals* are scheduled to pass just east of here, except on Sundays when the westbound train operates on a later schedule.

Another ornate old station serves Amtrak at Durant as we continue to follow Grand Trunk rails. At Flint the line turns due east again, making a beeline for the border city of Port Huron. The westbound train is inspected by United States customs officers at Port Huron while our eastbound train will undergo a Canadian customs check at Sarnia, the next stop. Between the two cities, the *International* passes through a 6,025 foot tunnel below the St. Clair River which connects Lake Huron to the north with Lake St. Clair to the south.

Sarnia is our first stop in the Canadian province of Ontario and is the site of a huge Canadian National Railway yard. Between here and London, we will travel over CN's Strathroy Subdivision which dates to the mid-1800s as does the remainder of our route to Toronto. The *International* is one of two daily trains serving the Sarnia-London-Kitchener-Toronto route. The other train serving the route is VIA's *Huron,* and the *International* should pass that train just west of London on Sundays and near St. Mary's, Ontario on other days. First time visitors to Canada will be interested to observe the unique LRC cars usually assigned to VIA's corridor trains.

The classic Niles, Michigan station is a highlight of the route of Amtrak's trains linking Chicago with Pontiac and Toronto. Photo by the author.

Ten minutes west of London we pass Komoka Jct. where the busy line from Windsor, Ontario joins on the right. Moments after leaving London our train curves to the north onto CN's Guelph Subdivision while the CN line to Toronto by way of Brantford bears off to the right. The route through Brantford is heavily used as VIA's main Toronto-Windsor corridor, hosting up to eleven VIA trains per day. Prior to April 1990 the *International* traveled over the Brantford line.

St. Mary's is the first stop on the Guelph Sub and is a typical Canadian city whose skyline is dominated by soaring church spires. The St. Mary's railway depot was built in 1902. Departing town, we cross a tall trestle and pass through miles of cornfields. A two-story station made of stone serves VIA passengers in Stratford and is one of the route's best patronized stops. The stub tracks opposite the depot often are occupied by CN snowplows awaiting their next winter assignment.

Ten minutes east of Stratford the railway passes one of the region's numerous sheep farms. Soon a talking defect detector announces *"Guelph Sub...no alarms."* Fifteen minutes later we pause in Kitchener, a usually busy stop whose station dates to 1897. Entering Guelph, a beautiful cathedral and row of church spires are visible behind houses located on the left. Canadian National steam engine # 6167 resides in a fenced-in area on the east side of the Guelph station which was constructed in 1911.

Gravel pits surround the railroad 15 miles east of Guelph. The attractive old limestone depot in Georgetown, our next stop, also is served by GO Transit commuter trains that travel to and from Toronto. We bid a final farewell to the rural landscape dotted by farms between Georgetown and Brampton before the scenery gives way to ever-increasing urban views as we approach Toronto. As the *Intemational* arrives at mammoth Toronto Union Station, it passes Skydome, home of the Toronto Blue Jays, and 1,815 foot tall CN Tower, considered the world's tallest free-standing structure.

A Michigan and Ontario Triangle

It is possible to travel roundtrip between Toronto and Chicago on separate routes east of Battle Creek, Michigan using day trains in both directions. This routing, unfortunately, requires a taxi connection between Amtrak's Detroit station and the VIA Rail Canada station in Windsor, Ontario, but is well worth the effort to experience the two different routes.

To maximize daylight viewing and minimize the possibility of tight connections, it is recommended that the eastbound trip be made by way of Detroit using Amtrak's morning *Wolverine* from Chicago to Detroit. This leaves a 75 minute window to taxi across the Detroit River to Windsor, assuming that the *Wolverine* is on time. It is worth noting that a customs stop must be made at the border. This routing permits arrival in Toronto by 6:30 p.m. on VIA train # 76, the *Erie.* Should connections be missed, a backup option exists in the form of VIA train # 78, the *Mohawk.* Both of these VIA trains follow the line through Brantford and are regularly equipped with either LRC or HEP-2 coaches and VIA- I first class cars. Persons wishing to ride the entire Chicago to Pontiac route can do so by taking the eastbound *Wolverine* from Chicago to Pontiac, returning to Detroit on the westbound

Twilight Limited, and taxiing to Windsor to catch VIA's *Mohawk to* Toronto.

The International provides the best westbound option as the Windsor/Detroit routing requires a lengthy layover and reaches Chicago at 9:45 p.m. compared to the *International's* 6:35 p.m. arrival. Note that the westbound *International* operates later on Sundays, missing connections with all Amtrak trains departing Chicago.

Due to the *Wolverine's* early departure from Chicago, the suggested routing requires an overnight stay in the Windy City before heading to Detroit. The westbound *International* compensates by making daily (except Sunday) connections at Hammond-Whiting to the *Capitol Limited* and at Chicago to the *Lake Shore Limited* and the evening *Hiawatha, as* well as the *City of New Orleans* and the *Cardinal* on certain days.

Combining a *Pere Marquette* ride with the Toronto triangle is, at best, extremely difficult as safe connections do not exist between the *Pere Marquette* and trains permitting a one-day trip to or from Toronto. The *Pere Marquette* does connect at Chicago with Detroit/Pontiac-bound trains, however, these require an overnight stay in the Detroit area. The *Pere Marquette* also connects with almost all Amtrak trains arriving and departing Chicago to or from other cities.

Each of the three routes fanning out across Miichigan is interesting in its own right, as are VIA's two routes between the border and Toronto. A triangle trip between Chicago and Toronto will normally allow a sampling of several types of equipment from Amtrak's Superliner, Hi-Level, Amfleet, and Horizon fleets and VIA's LRC and HEP-2 roster.

The author wishes to thank Steven Taubenkible and Harry Brigham of Amtrak and Malcolm Andrews of VIA Rail Canada for their assistance with this article.

MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

Correspondent Bruce J. Russell (left) enjoys a gourmet meal on the **Napa Valley Wine Train** on Oct 15, 1996 while researching the article that appeared in RTN 558.

Amtrak is assuming that the trains that it planned to drop last Nov 10 and which were saved temporarily by act of Congress will indeed be discontinued next May 10. It is not taking any reservations for these hit-list trains beyond May 10, and it is taking reservations for daily service on the California Zephyr and Empire Builder, trains that would have received daily operation if the hit-list trains had been discontinued.

Is this the best action it can take? If the hit-list trains are saved again with short notice, there will be no advance reservations for them, and it will take some time to rebuild ridership (the situation that occurred last November), and the CZ and EB will probably remain less than daily, so people who reserved them under the assumption of a daily schedule will have to be bumped or re-accommodated (also the situation that occurred last November). Isn't there a better solution to this problem?

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The Crescents, trains 19 & 20, were annulled between Birmingham and New Orleans for one week starting Jan 5 because Norfolk Southern was laying new rail between Tuscaloosa AL and Meridian MS. The railroad paid for buses to replace the Amtrak train for the period.

The Norfolk Southern Sugar Bowl Special arrived in New Orleans, track 6, at 10:10am on Jan 1. Traditionally, the railroad brought office cars to this event, usually attached to the **Crescent**, especially when Graham and Robert Claytor were in charge. However, this year the railroad ran the special for about 100 people who were involved in the 1947 Sugar Bowl (UNC played that year). Most of the passengers apparently boarded the special in Greensboro NC. The train's consist was: engines NS 7150, 7105 & 7134; cars NS 1 "Virginia", NS 2 "Carolina", C&NW 400401 "Lake Geneva", UP 200 "Omaha", C&NW 412 "Lake Forest", NS 28 "Powhatan Arrow" coach, NS 11 "Illinois", C&NW 413 "Lake Bluff", NS 20 "Ohio", NS 21 "West Virginia", NS 18 "General Wm B Mahone", NS 19 "Kentucky", NS 8 "Tennessee", NS 3 "Claytor Lake", NS 6 "Atlanta", NS 9 "Alabama", NS 29 "Powhatan Arrow" coach, NS 12 "Indiana", Conrail 8, NS 13 "Georgia", NS "Lambert Point" & NS 23 "Buena Vista". —Adron Hall.

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Amtrak is using roadrailers on trains to haul mail; one of them was pictured last issue in a photo by John P. Stith, on train 89. As of early Dec they were running between Philadelphia and Jacksonville FL.

A CSX coal train derailed Nov 29 at about 6:30pm near Yukon FL, just south of Jacksonville. This blocked the path of the northbound **Silver Star**, train 92. It went to Deland FL, where it was turned on a wye and then retraced its path through Orlando to Auburndale. It proceeded west to Lakeland, then north via the line used by the **Silver Palm** through Ocala. As the crew went "on the law", the train stopped east of Lakeland and waited for the northbound **Silver Palm**, which loaned one of its engineers to take train 92 to Jacksonville. The delay to train 92 was about 7hrs. It had left Miama 7hrs before train 90, but was overtaken by #90 near Lakeland. The **Silver Star** did arrive in Jacksonville first, as the **Silver Palm** had its usual Landland-Tampa routing to complete before heading to Jacksonville. RTN correspondent Jack Turner was aboard train 90 and was shocked to see another Amtrak train pointed westward near Lakeland at about 11:30pm.

NARP reported that aviation ticket taxes expired Dec 31, for the second time in a year. "The federal government failed to collect the tax from airline users most of 1996, draining $4 billion from the Aviation Trust Fund."

ColoRail reported that as of Jan 15 there were five bills of interest to rail passengers in the state: HB1047 allows retail sales at RTD facilities (park-n-rides); HB1071 gives the Public Utilities Commission oversight of Rail Fixed Guideways—definitely targeting the RTD; HJR1003 relates to Congressional Consideration of ISTEA; SB55 RTD Sales Tax—would allow the RTD Board to hold an election in its District to raise the state sales tax by .4¢; and SB37 Donation of railroad right of way.

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The southbound **Cascadia**, train 751 of Nov 25 was delayed 5hrs at a crossing near Sumner WA, about 15mins north of Tacoma, by what police were investigating as a grisly suicide. Witnesses told Pierce County Sheriff's Deputies that a car at the end of a line of cars waiting for the train to pass drove up to and around the lowered crossing gates and stopped in front of the train. They said the 30-year-old driver got out, closed the car door, stood against the car with his arms outstretched, and was smashed between the train and the car. A witness told Seattle's CBS Radio affiliate KIRO Newsradio that the frame of the car was left near the intersection and the car body was dragged half a mile down the tracks, wedged partially beneath the engine. The train had to be backed away to remove the car body from under the engine. F40 engine 254 sustained only minor damage and was declared fit to continue the trip. The train's speed at the time of impact was estimated at 73mph. Witnesses said the engineer had almost no time to react. The investigation took much longer than usual for a fatality accident because of the positioning of the car and the time taken retrieving parts of the victim's body. There were 134 passengers on the train. Police

were trying to determine why the victim took his own life in such a flamboyant manner. Trains 14, the **Coast Starlight**, and 752, the northbound **Mount Adams**, were held at Tacoma for short periods and later sent past the accident site on an adjacent track. The **Cascadia** continued its trip to Eugene on a nearly overnight schedule.

Reports are that Amtrak wants to replace completely the tri-color striping that has been its image for the past 15 years, replacing it with a mostly-blue image. The tri-color first appeared, to my recollection, on the AEM-7 locos when they were new. At first they looked like American Airlines stripes, inverted! The new scheme has now been applied to Amfleet, Superliners, AEM-7s, and I have a report of a painting diagram for the F40s. Reportedly there is a problem with the Genesis engines, as the current stripes taper across the nose, and the fine red stripes on the new scheme will not work out. Rumors persist that a replacement for the Amtrak pointless-arrow symbol in use since day one is being studied. —Gene Poon.

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The following assessment of Amtrak's budget situation for the coming year or so comes from a knowledgeable Western advocacy source:

The news will be the same as for the last 20 years: Amtrak won't die despite Congress's best efforts to kill it. There will be a bill to kill Amtrak this year, but there is almost no chance it will pass, due to Amtrak's great popularity at the state and local level. While Amtrak may not be killed outright, it will be starved over the next three years. However, there is support for what Amtrak really needs to eliminate its operating deficit—a big shot of capital. Amtrak this year has $30 million in capital funds, compared with $3 million in 1994. The gas tax proposal, if it passes, would guarantee Amtrak $75 million in capital funds—enough to replace all the rundown stations and start acquiring rails that are up for abandonment. Also, the renewal of ISTEA comes up in Congress this year. The feuding committee chairmen who inserted a total ban on Amtrak funding into the original bill are now gone, and their Republican successors are also gone, so there seems to be a good chance that if ISTEA is renewed, Amtrak will be eligible for some money.

Amtrak's improved capital budget is already having a big effect on West Coast service. The Board has committed to 30 new locos for West Coast service, 15 of them to California. Tests will be made to see if Amtrak orders GM or GE. Also in the new budget are rebuilding of the West Coast maintenance bases at L.A., Oakland and Seattle. But *not* in the budget are operating subsidies for some of Amtrak's most popular trains, including the **Coast Starlight**. Because of this, Amtrak is using its capital muscle to force additional subsidies out of the states, including California. Gil Mallery made public an offer to California in which Amtrak will pay for a new facility in L.A. in return for the state's providing subsidies for the **Starlight**.

Also not budgeted is provision to restore services scheduled to expire May 10. Amtrak would like to run service to Reno and Las Vegas, but a problem exists: Gov. Wilson has made it a policy that no California equipment or subsidies will leave the state, and Nevada's DOT isn't up to providing 403(b) funding. It seems a deal may be made to have Nevada DOT act as a conduit for Las Vegas casino money to make a 403(b) train possible, even to provide equipment.

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Conrail shareholders rejected Jan 17 a measure that CSX hoped would be approved, to smooth the way to a CSX takeover of CR. The vote does not totally reject the CSX deal, but it seems to make it easier for rival NS.

The Empire Builder route has been disrupted severely in Jan due to frigid weather, sometimes with heavy blizzards and temperatures far below zero. Train 7 that left Chicago Jan 8 was held at Stanley ND when heavy snow made onward travel hazardous. The BNSF closed the tracks between Havre and Minot. A Minot newspaper report said that Amtrak treated the passengers well. Food was brought to the train from a restaurant via a 4-wheel drive vehicle. The train was able to return to Minot, arriving there at 3:30am Jan 12, and passengers were sent to motels. Most of them were later flown out of Minot. A 3-day blizzard subjected Minot to 78mph winds and a wind chill factor of 86 below zero.

There was much more trouble for the **Builder** in Jan. Another example is the account of train 7 of Jan 15. It left Chicago 20mins late, was 4.5hrs late by Minneapolis, 15hrs late at Minot, 23hrs late at Havre, 24.25hrs late at Spokane, and reached Portland a day behind schedule. Causes of the delays were numerous events related to the snowy, cold weather.

The Broadway Limited returned, sort of, on Dec 21. To accommodate travelers from delayed Western trains, the **Three Rivers**, train 40, operated with a sleeper to NYC. Heritage car "Elk Grove", ex-SP, was the chosen car.

The Night Owl is still planned to run with Heritage sleepers. Ex-Santa Fe "Pine" series cars are the normal assignment. Although the ex-SP "Grove" and ex-UP "Pacific" cars are mostly in better shape, they are being studied for conversion to dorm-lounge and/or dorm-baggage cars, and the best of them have been set aside. The **Night Owl** may be threatened, however, as Amtrak seems to want a clear window for work in preparation for high-speed trains. The **Owl** is the only interfering traffic, so it may be dropped, in spite of its being well-patronized; the sleeper always sells out & 4 or more coaches fill up well.

News in this issue is updated thru Jan 21.

The westbound Pioneer, train 25 that left Chicago Jan 12, derailed Jan 13 about 4pm at Granite Canyon, nine miles west of Borie, Wyoming in weather of several degrees below zero.

The cause of the derailment was not immediately known. The entire train except for the lead locomotive and the last car left the tracks but did not tip over. Some cars jackknifed, according to passenger reports. Consist of the train was engines UP (ex-C& NW) 8648 (GE Dash-9-44CW) & Amtrak 380 & 361 (F40s); cars 1422 & 1548 MHCs, Superliner sleepers 32029 & 32033, Superliner II lounge 38060, Superliners 34094 coach, 31016 coach-baggage & 35007 snack-coach, and Superliner II transition dorm-sleeper 39015. The freight engine was put on the train in Denver after one of the Amtrak engines had malfunctioned. The train was running over 2hrs late, with 107 passengers and 14 crew. There were eight minor injuries and one injured person held overnight suffering chest pains. Amtrak gave the passengers blankets and stick lights until two school buses and a chartered bus arrived to take them to three hotels. They were given the option of flying or being bused to their destinations.

A bill to give states flexibility to spend some of their federal ISTEA money on intercity passenger trains, a goal long sought after by rail advocates, may be introduced in the Senate as early as Jan 21, NARP said. Its sponsors would be Senators Roth and Biden of Delaware. NARP requested that rail advocates ask their Senators to co-sponsor the bill.

A good chance to get Amtrak a half cent of the federal gasoline tax comes in a bill introduced in the House the week of Jan 6: House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee chairman Bud Shuster introduced bill HR 4 that would take the transportation trust funds off budget. Shuster, along with the ranking Democrat on the committee James Oberstar of MN believe they have a viable deal with Senate majority leader Trent Lott (R-MS) to get the Senate to pass the bill this year, unlike last year. The plan is to include in HR 4 a half cent of gas tax for Amtrak, which Lott favors.

This money would be a shot in the arm for Amtrak and would come none too soon, as it is reported that Amtrak's financial situation is worse this year, and is being worsened by the continued storm situation in the West and the Plains states, where many trains have been annulled and ridership thus lessened. The Wall St Journal on Jan 15 published an article on Amtrak, which RTN has not seen, but it is reported that the thrust of the story was that Amtrak's deficit more than doubled in the first quarter of FY 1997, probably forcing it to borrow up to $70 million to make it through the fiscal year.

The federal budget of the Clinton Administration will be submitted to Congress Feb 6. If there is time before that, rail advocates should tell the President to support an Amtrak operating grant of at least $245 million, as well as a half cent of the gas tax for amtrak.

NARP reported that the new chairman of the Senate Transportation Subcommittee will be Richard Shelby (R-AL). Other new members reported are in the House Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee—Todd Tiahrt (R-KS) and Alderholt (R-AL). They are leading budget-cutters, NARP said, and that subcommittee last year proposed "huge" funding cuts for Amtrak. Other new members of that subcom are Democrats Esteban E. Torres of CA, John W. Olver of MA and Ed Pastor of AZ.

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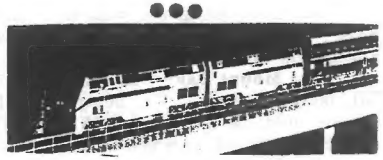

The Southwest Chief and the **Capitol Ltd** on Jan 20 became essentially one train running as a transcontinental, as forecast here earlier. However, Amtrak did not change the train numbers to #15 & 16, but kept the former numbers of 4/30 and 29/3. While the equipment has been running through Chicago for some time now, beginning Jan 20 passengers could remain on the train and keep their same space going through Chicago. Agents can now sell space for the through train, with just one accommodation.

While the train is in Chicago, passengers may also leave and visit the city; Amtrak said it has a security guard for the train and passengers' belongings. To re-board the train, a passenger must show both the incoming and outgoing tickets at the train door. On the eastbound run, lunch is served aboard the train before arrival in Chicago. Westbound, there is a long layover in Chicago, so no lunch is served on the train. Passengers have plenty of time to leave the train and dine in the city and do sightseeing before departure, which is at 5:10pm. Car numbers change in Chicago, but the same car is occupied. RTN has urged this kind of service for many years.

Rocky Mountain News travel section reported Jan 19 that the following are the top continental US travel destinations for Coloradans (not in any order): San Diego; *San Francisco;* Santa Fe/Taos; *Washington DC;* Orlando; L.A./Orange County; Seattle; Boston/Northeast; and Arizona. (Those in italics are areas served directly from Denver via Amtrak as of spring, 1997.) If Amtrak were to add the Denver-La Junta or Denver-Raton bus connection recommended by ColoRail, direct connections would be restored to San Diego, L.A./Orange County, Santa Fe and Arizona points. —Robert Rynerson.

Speaking of tourism, the NY Times reveals that Las Vegas now has 100,000 hotel rooms (compared to 16,000 in San Francisco) and 30 million visitors a year. And Amtrak plans to discontinue its only train to Las Vegas.

The Salt Lake City paper Deseret News reported Jan 13 that Time magazine listed the top five places for job growth in the US as Las Vegas (1st place), Phoenix, Austin TX, Salt Lake City and Boise ID. Amtrak is pulling out of all these hot spots, however.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"In some ways, this says, no more, we are not going to remain slaves to the automobile, as we have been. We have to create a new future that is not completely dependent on so many cars and buses in the canyon."

—Grand Canyon National Park superintendent Rob Arnberger, quoted in the NY Times Jan 1 commenting on new Interior Dept rules issued Dec 31 that restrict aircraft overlights of the park, and which are the beginnings of a larger plan to restrict auto traffic at the Grand Canyon and in some other popular National Parks.

WEST COAST REPORT (continued from page 7)

numerous slides along the waterside track of BNSF. Amtrak substituted buses between Eugene and Vancouver BC.

The **Mount Baker International,** train 761, fairly narrowly being struck by a massive mudslide late an 15 at Woodway near Edmonds WA. A whole hillside slid down onto the BNSF tracks, creating what was described as "50 feet of new shoreline". Train 761 had passed the spot about 2hrs earlier. A BNSF container train was not so lucky: the slide hit the train and sent about 12 freight cars down an embankment into Puget Sound. About 300 feet of track was taken out. The container cars carried "tens of thousands" of Postal Service and UPS packages and mail, including periodicals. The BNSF estimated at first a 48-hr restoral of track, later changing that to 2-3 weeks. Affected was not only the **Mount Baker** but also the **Empire Builder** that uses that section of line into and out of Seattle. While Vancouver passengers were being bused, the **Empire Builder** was originating and terminating in Portland, with bus service Seattle-Spokane. BNSF reportedly wanted to do a more permanent job of straightening the track at the affected location in preparation for RTA commuter trains.

Amtrak reportedly was unable to detour the **Empire Builder** via the Stampede Pass line because the Superliner cars will not fit in the tunnel. It was believed that spray-on concrete used in the bore diminished its size enough to rule out Superliners.

For **Empire Builder** storm disruptions, see Mixed Train of Thoughts.

Yosemite National Park was closed due to flood damage to manmade structures such as its sewage system and some cabins. The SF Examiner Jan 19 editorialized that this is an opportunity to jump-start plans to eliminate some roads and move some facilities outside the park. Officials would not estimate when the park will reopen, but Amtrak said it will remain closed through Feb 1, and that hotel reservations for beyond that date are being taken. The closure affects **San Joaquin** patron-age. There were 17 washouts on Highway 140, used by Amtrak bus connections. There was no word on whether high water from the Merced River had damaged the old Yosemite Valley Railroad right of way.

The controversy still rages over the BART line proposal to the San Francisco airport. One of the most recent statement published was by an S.F. lawyer, James W. Haas, who wrote in the SF Chronicle Jan 15 that BART should drop its planned Millbrae wye and build a San Bruno station to connect with CalTrain. He said it would reduce costs by $175-$250 million and remove the city of Burlingame's opposition and that of various transit environmental groups.

California Gov. Wilson's requested budget for passenger trains for 1997-8 is a record amount, $56.3 million. That is said to include $2.2 million for **San Joaquin** service between Sacramento and Stockton.

EXCURSION OF THE MONTH

May 21, May 27 or Jun 4: The Last Best Place: Montana by Private Rail. 9-day trips from Glacier Park Airport to Glacier Park, Paradise, Missoula, Garrison, Gates of the Mountains, Helena, Three Forks, Madison, Whitehall, Yellowstone Park, Billings, Little Bighorn Battlefield, Billings to airport home. (May 27 departure does trip in reverse.) Three nights in private train, the Northern Parks Ltd (Montana Rockies Daylight equipt), of seven beautifully restored vintage cars, including dome car. Tour guides Harry Fritz and Barbara Batey. Limit 50 guests. Price $2990-$5090. Air transport extra. Accent on Travel, 112 N. Fifth St, Klamath Falls OR 97601. 1-800-347-0645.

Feb 22-28: Delta Queen steamboat Galveston to New Orleans. Fly St. Louis-Houston-Galveston. $1155 & up. Real American Experiences, Inc., 4351 Holly Hills Blvd, St Louis MO 63116-2255. Info: 314- 752-3148. Includes round trip air, cruise, on-board meals, taxes.

Apr 18-22: Farewell to Amtrak's Pioneer & Desert Wind, scheduled for last runs in May. Fly St Louis-Seattle, Pioneer to Ogden-SLC, Desert Wind to L.A., fly home. $795 & up. American Ass'n of Railroaders, 4351 Holly Hills Blvd, St Louis MO 63116-2255.

Jun 20-24: Royal Gorge Steam Special, UP 844. 1st public psgr train in Gorge in nearly 30 yrs, probably the last. $989 coach, $1119 dome. Fly St Louis-Denver. Train Denver-SLC. May be sold out. Amer. Ass'n Railroaders, see address above.

THE OPEN VESTIBULE

As a rail passenger advocate for over 50 years and having retired from Amtrak in Nov 1994 after nearly 22 years of service, my desire to see Amtrak prosper and be successful continues. I serve (for 17 years) on the NARP Board of Directors and spent much of my time and money in this effort.

I must say, however, that my frustration with recent Amtrak management decisions has gotten to the point of throwing in the towel. The so-called fixed consist which almost prevents adding of equipment to meet demands is self-destructive. Then, just a few days before the Christmas holidays (too late for travelers who have already been turned away and have made other travel arrangements) additional cars appear on certain trains. These extra cars in many cases make several trips up and down the railroad almost empty. Our adversaries can point to the empty seats and say "See—nobody ride the trains, even during the busy holidays!"

Then there is the matter of fares. The so-called yield management concept will be the death of Amtrak. Amtrak ticket agents tell me that many people turn around and walk off because of the confusion of the fare structure and many impediments. Example: one way fares, L.A. to Garden City KS, $226, 1415 miles; L.A. to Kansas City MO, $226, 1800 miles; L.A. to Chicago, $235, 2230 miles. The traveler to Garden City more so than the Kansas City traveler is *subsidizing* (a word Amtrak abhors in reference to federal funds it receives) the Chicago passenger who is getting a ride 815 miles farther for only a $9 additional cost.

The traveler from Garden City has only one public transportation choice, Amtrak—no bus or air service available. The Kansas City and Chicago travelers have all three choices, with air fares as low as $79. If anyone can justify this inequity and many, many more such screwball fares, please advise.

Small markets with few options being discouraged from using Amtrak while large markets with cheap and multiple service being favored. Does this make business sense?

John A. Mills
Topeka, Kansas.

Anthony Haswell's letter in RTN 556 leaves a distorted and misleading impression of both Amtrak's 1994 financial results and URPA's analysis of them. Let me set the record straight.

The URPA analysis Mr. Haswell criticized was done in early 1995 based on early Amtrak data from FY 94. URPA wanted to see where the federal subsidy was going because we knew the amount of cash coming in from Congress didn't square with what Amtrak said it was "losing" on train operations. The analysis unearthed some interesting conclusions, including that Amtrak's losses were greater than widely perceived (but not from long-haul train operations), and management was going to great lengths to avoid disclosure of them (by dererring maintenance, deferring layoffs, deferring vendor payments, and booking ticket revenues much earlier than traditionally allowed, etc.).

We showed from Amtrak's own data that the NE Corridor was losing about $350 million ($260 million in cash), the national system about $100 million ($60 million in cash).

As soon as Amtrak saw the analysis, they gave us *new* numbers for 1994 that showed (1) actual losses were even higher, and (2) management allocated a greater share of fixed costs, corporate/headquarters

costs, and NEC costs to the national system than we did (e.g., AEM-7 maintenance costs allocated to trains 11 and 14 equipment maintenance accounts).

We then updated our analysis and concluded that the NEC losses actually were a little worse than we first figured, and that national system losses were closer to $100 million in cash than the $60 million we had originally figured based on Amtrak's earlier data. (In FY 96, Intercity again reported losses of $105.5 million).

Mr. Haswell has made several serious errors. First, he analyzed URPA's preliminary assessment, not its final report. Second, he bases his reasoning on accepting Amtrak's data and notorious accounting methodology and cost allocations at face value. (An Amtrak senior officer recently said that their accounting "...makes our good trains look bad and our bad trains look good.") Third, he seems to believe Amtrak propaganda that the NEC is "successful" (financially) and that Metroliners "earned" $100 million. The NEC is so "successful" that Amtrak can't *give* it away; American taxpayers subsidize the NEC alone on a fully allocated cost basis to the tune of nearly a billion dollars a year. Metroliners' incremental maintenance of way expenses alone consume more than half their gross revenue; if Amtrak charged the Metroliners with *all* of just their direct costs, they would show a *loss* of nearly $100 million a year, in cash.

In the end, all Mr. Haswell has shown is that Amtrak's losses for FY 94 were worse than Amtrak originally told URPA they were and that Amtrak allocates its costs differently than we do, points with which we concur.

Regrettably, however, Mr. Haswell has not answered this key question: If Intercity lost $105 million this year and Congress gave Amtrak $375 million, where did the rest of the money go? And, since the federal subsidy is more than 300% of the cash needs of Intercity, why isn't Intercity getting full funding for its skeletal, shrinking, once-a-day (or less) national network of heavily-used trains?

Thus, Mr. Haswell joins Mr. Downs, Mr. Cane and Mercer Consulting in calling for *more* cuts in cash cow Western long hauls, every single one of which today earns a positive net cash flow, even though cutting these trains has *never* saved any money (the 1979 loss of the **Lone Star**, for example, *cost* Amtrak $10 million a year; the Mercer plan losses in 1996 haven't been measured yet, but they were so horribly counterproductive that even Amtrak had to admit their failure.)

Here's a challenge for Mr. Haswell to contribute something useful to the policy debate over Amtrak: show us a detailed calculation of where Amtrak would derive the highest return on investment of available federal capital, measured solely by yield of incremental revenue passenger miles per dollar invested.

Andrew C. Selden, VP-Law & Policy
URPA, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

CARS & CONSISTS

***Lake Shore Limited**, train 49, Rensselaer NY Nov 27: engines 407, 336 (F40s); cars 1402 & 1444 MHCs, 1253 baggage, 2455 "Elm Grove" slpr, Amfleet II 25040, 25087, 25049 coaches (all from #449 Boston section), 28003 lounge, 25101, 25011 & 25082 coaches, 8550 diner, Viewliner slprs 62029 "Prairie View" & 62017 "Majestic View", slpr 2436 "Pacific Crest" as crew/dorm, 1248 baggage. Same, train 48, Chicago Dec 2: engines 301 & 351 (F40s); cars 1537 MHC, 1132 baggage, 2993 "Pine Gorge" slpr, Amfleet II 25095, 25089 coaches (to #448 at Rensselaer), 25080, 25110, 25010, 25018 & 25072 coaches, 28017 lounge, 8505 diner, Viewliner sleepers 62028 "Palisades View" & 62010 "Forest View", 2447 "Sycamore Grove" slpr as crew/dorm, 1212 baggage.

***Bay State**, train 85, Newark NJ Dec 19: engine 951 (AEM-7); cars Amfleet I 21253, 21065, 21226, 44673* coaches, 20037 café/coach, 44935 Custom coach. (* denotes NortheastDirect color scheme.)

***New Yorker**, train 191, Newark NJ Dec 19: engine 916 (AEM-7); cars Amfleet I 21657, 21049, 44644, 21628, 21025 coaches, 48151 club/dinette, 21680 coach.

***The Bankers**, train 148, Newark NJ Dec 19: engine 935 (AEM-7); cars Amfleet I 21056 coach, 20052 café/coach, 21137, 44665, 21015, 21240 coaches, 1162 baggage.

***Vermonter**, train 56, Newark NJ Dec 25: engine 925 (AEM-7); cars 9643 cab-coach, 44661*, 44279, 44650* coaches, 48155 club-dinette (as a Custom class/dinette**), 1802 baggage. (Noted old #44198 bleeding through on coach 44650, shooting down the theory that the 21000/44000 series were being renumbered in the 600 suffix based on the last two digits.) (* denotes NortheastDirect color scheme; ** denotes NED decals only.) —James Langan.

***Desert Wind/Pioneer**, train 35/25, Denver Jan 3: engines 513 & 515 (P32s), 384 (F40) (all Chicago-L.A.), 380 & 361 (F40s, both Denver to Seattle); cars 1524 mail Den-Sea, 1468 mail Chi-Sea, 1453 mail Chi-Den, 1463 mail Chi-L.A., (Chi-L.A.:) 1183 baggage, Superliner II transition dorm-sleeper 39004, Superliners sleepers 32058 & 32056, diner 38010, lounge 33006, coach-smoker 31525, coaches 34094 & 34028, coach-baggage 31029, (Chi-Den:) Superliner II sleeper 32074 "Colorado", (Chi-Sea:) Superliner II sleeper 32092 "Mississippi", Superliners sleeper 32011, diner 38001, coach 34070, coach-bag 31036, (Den-Sea:) 35007 coach-snack bar, 34047 coach not open, Superliner II transition dorm-sleeper 39015. Train arrived 9:15am, 30minutes late.—Jeff Dunning.

BOOK REVIEWS

The 1996-1997 edition of the *Canadian Rail Passenger Yearbook*, published by Trackside Canada, is now available.

For anyone with any interest in Canadian trains, and especially in their history, this splendid volume is a must-have.

This is a 92-page softbound 8½x11 book with coated color cover, with many black & white and color photos. The book is very attractive, having a pleasing layout. The photos range from historic B&Ws, along with old etchings and diagrams, to modern rail operations, including Amtrak trains in Canada.

The book opens with a 10-page review of Canadian passenger rail events of 1994 and 1995. Its remaining sections are "The RDCing of Canadian Pacific", a 110-yr history of passenger trains and stations in Vancouver, photographer's gallery (a tour of the Maritimes), an account of Canadian Hospital Cars in the two world wars, and "By Canadian Pacific to the Maritimes" (an account of the *Atlantic* and its predecessors).

The volume throughout is of high quality reproduction. The photo selection has been made with a fine eye to engaging scenes.

The book can be ordered for $21.95 plus $2.50 postage from Trackside Canada, PO Box 1369, Station B, Ottawa, ON Canada K1P 5R4. Highly recommended.

Pre-Thanksgiving Trip (continued from page 10)

to terminate it. Although I would never wish the end of any train, I wonder how it can keep going when there are plans to discontinue the PIONEER and EAGLE.

. It was my first trip on the CARDINAL since Superliner equipment, and I was anxious to enjoy the very scenic daytime trip that train offers. But--you guessed it--daytime movies again! Just as we crossed Buffalo Gap and dropped down the Cowpasture River, the announcement was made. The lounge was full, and a great groan went up from the assembled multitudes. Soon fewer than ten people were left, and several of these were sightseers trying valiantly to enjoy the scenery. Soon they gave up, and about six people remained for the movie. Why does Amtrak shoot itself in the foot this way?

The other point of interest to me was the CARDINAL's access into Chicago, changed since my last trip. I had heard a great deal about delays, but, perhaps because it was Thanksgiving morning, there were none. But it was an interesting experience: six subdivisions on five railroads, all in an hour.

The process began as we left Dyer, one minute late at 7:22am. A few minutes later we came to Maynard, which is now the north end of the CSX Monon Subdivision, and curved left onto the GTW at Munster, once the route of the MAPLE LEAF. Ten minutes brought us to the UP crossing at Thornton Junction. Rather than continue on the circuitous GTW route into Chicago, we turned north, on the former C&EI route once used by the GEORGIAN. There was a brief pause at a signal, and then through Dolton Yard, where most delays occur, and where we were stopped for several minutes. From here we were following the old C&WI, whose commuter train ran into Dearborn Station. By 8:03am we were at 81st St. and went onto the Chicago District on NS. In another few minutes we joined the Manhattan Branch of NS, the former Wabash main to St. Louis used by the BLUE BIRD and still used by commuter trains. We were now on the main access to Dearborn Station used by all roads except AT&SF and GTW, but this line now joins Conrail south of 22nd St. With the backup move into Union Station we arrived at 8:34am, 41 minutes early.

5. Final note. There are five Superliner lounges in storage in New Orleans. Why are these not on the PIONEER?